UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/1992/NGO/4
16 June 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Substantive session of 1992
29 June-31 July 1992
Item 14 of the provisional agenda*

STRENGTHENING OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND COORDINATION OF EFFORTS TO STUDY, MITIGATE AND MINIMIZE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE CHERNOBYL DISASTER

Statement submitted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 23 and 24 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

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Chernobyl: humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation programme

In May 1993 the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is planning to convene, in cooperation with the Ukrainian Red Cross, an international workshop in Kiev that will be devoted to the role of non-governmental organizations, specifically the Red Cross, in the aftermath of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident.

The Federation's involvement in alleviating the consequences of the accident goes back to the beginning of 1990 when it was approached by the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with an appeal for humanitarian assistance.

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The Federation has been involved in the past in man-made disasters of this type; however, it still does not feel competent enough to make judgements on the scope of the catastrophe and far-reaching statements with regard to the most appropriate means of mitigating and minimizing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

The Federation also does not consider that it should play an independent role in assisting the victims of the catastrophe, since it does not possess either enough competence or relevant resources. It is prepared rather to join other institutions and organizations that are better placed to confront this extremely challenging task.

Nevertheless, in the beginning of 1990 the Federation invited a group of international experts to assist it in designing the programme that could be relevant to the needs of the victims and at the same time correspond to the Red Cross mandate.

Pursuant to the recommendations of the international expert group the League, in cooperation with the Red Cross Societies of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, started at the end of 1990 a programme that was aimed at promoting greater awareness of the actual dangers of contamination and the safeguards to be employed against them through establishing a public information/health education programme.

The major elements of this programme are:

(a) Six mobile laboratories operating in Belarus (Gomel and Mogilev), the Russian Federation (Bryansk and Kursk) and Ukraine (Zhitomir and Rovno). Those laboratories staffed with a crew of six experts are equipped with the following devices:

(i) Whole-body monitors;

(ii) Food monitors (two pes);

(iii) Portable gamma radiation dosimeters (two pes);

(iv) Blood-testing equipment;

(v) Urine-testing equipment;

(b) Twenty food monitors distributed equally among the national Red Cross Societies;

(c) Three hundred fifty portable gamma radiation meters operated by the national Red Cross Societies.